

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please cancel claims 1-10 and 45-52 without prejudice.

1-10. (canceled)

11. (original) A method comprising:

logically grouping a plurality of components at a data center into a single  
meta-server;

defining one or more hierarchical relationships between each of said  
components including one or more associations, dependencies  
and/or prerequisites, said hierarchical relationships providing  
information related to network operations at said data center; and  
using said information for one or more network management functions at  
said data center.

12. (original) The method as in claim 11 wherein a first one of said defined  
hierarchical relationships comprise: a first zone or resource collection comprised  
of a first subset of said plurality of components.

13. (original) The method as in claim 12 wherein a second zone or resource  
collection of said defined hierarchical relationships comprise: a second zone  
comprised of a second subset of said plurality of components.

14. (original) The method as in claim 13 wherein a third one of said defined  
hierarchical relationships comprise: an interconnect logically connecting said first  
zone and said second zone.

15. (original) The method as in claim 12 wherein one of said components grouped within said first zone is a Web server.
16. (original) The method as in claim 13 wherein one of said components grouped in both said first zone and said second zone is a firewall.
17. (original) The method as in claim 11 wherein one of said components is a router.
18. (original) The method as in claim 11 wherein one of said network management functions is to initialize one or more of said system components at said data center and said defined hierarchical relationships between each of said system components is used to determine an appropriate order in which to initialize said one or more components.
19. (original) The method as in claim 18 wherein initializing comprises rebooting one or more of said system components.
20. (original) The method as in claim 18 wherein initializing comprises restarting one or more of said system components.
21. (original) The method as in claim 18 wherein initializing comprises reconfiguring one or more of said system components.
22. (original) A meta-server comprising:  
a plurality of front end Web servers to process client requests for Web

pages;

a plurality of back-end servers to perform various back-end processing functions associated with said client requests;  
a controller to define one or more logical hierarchical relationships between each of said components including one or more associations, dependencies and/or prerequisites, said hierarchical relationships providing information related to network operations at said data center and to use said information for one or more network management functions at said data center.

23. (original) The meta-server as in claim 22 further comprising:  
a firewall communicatively coupled between said front-end Web servers and said back-end servers to analyze and filter data traffic directed towards said back end servers,  
said controller further defining one or more additional logical hierarchical relationships between said firewall and said front-end and/or said back-end servers.

24. (original) The meta-server as in claim 23 further comprising:  
a router communicatively coupled between said front-end Web servers, said back-end servers and an external network, said router to process data traffic according to a network addressing protocol,  
said controller further defining one or more additional logical hierarchical relationships between said router, said front-end servers, said back-end servers and/or said firewall.

25. (original) The meta-server as in claim 22 wherein said front-end servers and said back-end servers are physically configured within a single unitized platform.

26. (original) The meta-server as in claim 25 wherein said front-end servers and said back-end servers communicate over a dynamically configurable backplane bus.

27. (original) The meta-server as in claim 22 wherein said defined hierarchical relationships comprise a first zone including said front-end Web servers, a second zone including said back-end servers, and an interconnect logically coupling said first zone with said second zone.

28. (original) The meta-server as in claim 24 wherein said defined hierarchical relationships comprise a first zone including said front-end Web servers, a second zone including said back-end servers, an interconnect logically coupling said first zone with said second zone, and an interconnect resource comprised of said firewall.

29. (original) An article of manufacture including program code which, when executed by a machine, cause said machine to perform the operations of:

logically grouping a plurality of components at a data center into a single meta-server;

defining one or more hierarchical relationships between each of said components, said hierarchical relationships providing information related to network operations at said data center; and

using said information for one or more network management functions at  
said data center.

30. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 29 wherein a first one of said defined hierarchical relationships comprise: a first zone comprised of a first subset of said plurality of components.

31. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 30 wherein a second one of said defined hierarchical relationships comprise: a second zone comprised of a second subset of said plurality of components.

32. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 31 wherein a third one of said defined hierarchical relationships comprise: an interconnect logically connecting said first zone and said second zone.

33. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 30 wherein one of said components grouped within said first zone is a Web server.

34. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 31 wherein one of said components grouped in both said first zone and said second zone is a firewall.

35. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 29 wherein one of said components is a router.

36. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 29 wherein one of said network management functions is to initialize one or more of said system

components at said data center and said defined hierarchical relationships

between each of said system components is used to determine an appropriate order in which to initialize said one or more components.

37. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 36 wherein initializing comprises rebooting one or more of said system components.

38. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 36 wherein initializing comprises restarting one or more of said system components.

39. (original) The article of manufacture as in claim 36 wherein initializing comprises reconfiguring one or more of said system components.

40. (original) A method comprising:  
defining one or more logical hierarchical relationships between a plurality  
components on a network including one or more associations,  
dependencies and/or prerequisites, said logical hierarchical  
relationships providing information related to network operations;  
and  
executing a simulation of said network operations based on said  
hierarchical relationships between said components.

41. (original) The method as in claim 40 further comprising: storing different groups of said logical hierarchical relationships into one or more tool sets, said tool sets usable for conducting said simulation.

42. (original) The method as in claim 41 further comprising: using results of said simulation to design additional logical hierarchical relationships between said components.

43. (original) The method as in claim 42 wherein designing additional logical hierarchical relationships comprises optimizing said logical hierarchical relationships between said components.

44. (original) The method as in claim 42 wherein said additional logical hierarchical relationships are designed responsive to an inclusion of new components on said network.

45-52. (canceled)